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180503Z Jul 03

UNCLAS HARARE 001457

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION PRESIDENT BUSH'S VISIT TO AFRICA;
HARARE

1. An editorial and an op-ed article carried in the July 13 edition of the pro-government weekly "The Sunday Mirror" concentrate on the talks between President George W. Bush and his South African counterpart, Thabo Mbeki, during President Bush's visit to Africa. Excerpts follow:

2. Under headline "Time to set road map in motion" the paper comments:

"U. S. President George W. Bush left Africa last week after making significantly progressive statements on the resolution of Zimbabwe's political stalemate. His endorsement of the African initiative on Zimbabwe was the final confirmation to all those who expected and actually agitated for a more muscular approach to the country's protracted impasse that only Africans and Zimbabweans in particular were better placed to sort out the country's challenges. . . The country must now put into motion its road map for a transition out of the current impasse without getting obfuscated by academic and irrelevant demands that do not serve the interests of the nations. . . ."

3. Under headline "Zimbabwe: The messages from the Mbeki/Bush meeting" the same newspaper carried the following op-ed under its ghost column "The Scrutator" on page 10:

". . . But, was there a 'climb-down' on the part of the U. S. A., as claimed in some official circles here in Zimbabwe? No. There could have been no 'climb-down' if there had been no 'climb-up' in the first instance. For, the position of both the U. S. A. and Britain on the question of Zimbabwe had been stated quite clearly by the American Assistant Secretary of State, William Kansteiner. . . following the visit to Harare on 5 May, 2003, by the three African Presidents, Mbeki, Obasanjo and Muluzi. Both expressed confidence in this "African initiative. . ." So, if there had been a 'climb-down,' it was in May, 2003, after which the burden was firmly on Mbeki's shoulders. That Bush would so unequivocally re-affirm that. . . is only a pyrrhic (sic) victory for those in Zimbabwe who are gloating over what they perceive as another defeat for the MDC (Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)); in reality, it is a major challenge for Mbeki in particular and a loud warning for Harare. . . ."

SULLIVAN